



**DO-NOT-RESUSCITATE (DNR) GUIDELINES**



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I. AUTHORITY AND REFERENCES:

*Health and Safety Code, Division 2.5, Section 1798; California Code of Regulations, Title 22, Division 5, Section 72527; Probate Code Sections 4000-4026, 4600-4643, and 4780-4786.*

II. PURPOSE:

This policy identifies the types of documents and the circumstances in which emergency response employees may withhold or withdraw resuscitative measures.

III. APPLICATION:

- A. This policy shall apply to individuals in any licensed health care facility (e.g., long term health care facilities, skilled nursing facilities, hospice/other facilities) or to individuals in a private residence or other location who have expressed a desire to avoid resuscitative measures.
- B. Emergency response employees may withhold or withdraw resuscitative measures when presented with a legally executed DNR directive or other acceptable DNR order, as long as it can be reasonably determined that the patient is the subject of the document. Emergency response employees may also withhold or withdraw resuscitative measures for patients without said documents but whose immediate family is on scene and desire to make a decision to withhold resuscitation.
- C. Exception:
  - 1. Relief of airway obstruction in a patient who is still conscious.

IV. DEFINITIONS:

- A. **"Advance Health Care Directive"** or "advance directive" means a document executed pursuant to the Health Care Decisions Law. This document allows either or both of the following:
  - 1. Appoints another person as the patient's "health care agent" or "attorney-in-fact."
  - 2. The patient may write specific health care wishes.
- B. **"Attorney-in-Fact"** or "health care agent" means a person granted authority to act for the person as governed by the Power of Attorney Law (Division 4.5, commencing with Section 4670 of the Probate Code). This person has legal authority to make decisions about the named individual's medical care.
- C. **"Do-Not-Resuscitate (DNR)"** means no chest compressions, no defibrillation, no assisted ventilation, no basic airway adjuncts, no advanced airway adjuncts (endotracheal tube, Combitube), no cardiopulmonary medications or other medications or means intended to initiate a heartbeat or to treat a non-perfusing rhythm.



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*Italicized Text Identifies Quotations From An Authority Outside The Orange County EMS.*

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- D. **"DNR Directive"** means a DNR document or order that is:
1. An approved State of California Emergency Medical Services Authority (EMSA)/California Medical Association (CMA) prehospital DNR request or an equivalent document from another jurisdiction.
  2. A Medic Alert ® medallion or bracelet with engraved directions.
  3. DNR orders written by a physician for patients in hospices, skilled nursing facilities, or other licensed facilities.
- E. **"DNR Medallion"** means a Medic Alert ® medallion/bracelet engraved with the words "do not resuscitate", or the letters "DNR", or "DNR-EMS", a patient identification number, and a 24-hour toll-free telephone number issued by a person pursuant to an agreement with the Emergency Medical Services Authority.
- F. **"Emergency Response Employees"** includes, but is not limited to, firefighters, law enforcement officers, emergency medical technicians I and II, paramedics, and employees and volunteer members of legally organized and recognized volunteer organization...."
- G. **"Immediate Family"** means the spouse, adult child(ren), parent of a patient, adult sibling, or domestic partner (pursuant to Section 297 of the Family Code).

### V. GUIDELINES FOR HONORING A DO-NOT-RESUSCITATE ORDER:

- A. Emergency response employees shall recognize that an adult has the fundamental right to control the decisions relating to his or her own health care, including the decision to have life-sustaining treatment withheld or withdrawn.
- B. Emergency response employees shall, at all times, respect the patient's right to dignity and privacy. DNR patients shall receive necessary supportive care and other comfort measures, even if said care, such as administration of pain medication, may shorten the patient's life.
- C. The DNR order shall be disregarded if the patient requests resuscitative measures.
- D. Emergency response employees shall honor a DNR request when it can be reasonably established that the patient is the subject of the DNR request, and
1. Emergency response employees have identified a DNR Directive or DNR medallion as defined elsewhere in this document, or
  2. The emergency response employee has personally seen the DNR order in the patient's medical record in a licensed facility.
    - a. The emergency response employee shall document on the prehospital care report (PCR) the name of the physician writing the order and the date the order was signed.

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Approved:

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- E. Emergency response employees may accept a verbal request to withhold or withdraw resuscitative measures under the following circumstances:
1. A licensed physician and surgeon, identified as the patient's physician and present with the patient, gives the emergency response employee a verbal order.
    - a. The physician should write the DNR order on the PCR and sign the order.
    - b. The physician's name, address, telephone number, and medical license number should also be recorded on the PCR.
  2. A DNR request is communicated by an "attorney-in-fact" or "health care agent."
    - a. The attorney-in-fact must specifically identify themselves as the prescribed attorney-in-fact in the written document.
    - b. The attorney-in-fact should sign the PCR as the "attorney-in-fact."
  3. Immediate family, present at the scene, may decline resuscitative measures on behalf of the patient.
    - a. The name(s) of the immediate family who made the decision to withhold or withdraw resuscitative measures shall be documented on the PCR.
    - b. The immediate family member shall sign the PCR.
- F. Emergency response employees should note on the PCR that a DNR order was present and honored.
- G. Base contact should be made and the Base Physician consulted and resuscitation should be initiated:
1. If there are any questions regarding validity of the DNR order, or
  2. If DNR directive is incomplete or not signed, or
  3. When a document other than those listed in this policy is presented to emergency response employees, or
  4. If there is a concern regarding identification of "immediate family," or
  5. If there is disagreement among family members regarding the provision or withdrawal of resuscitative measures, or
  6. Anytime emergency response employees have concerns or require assistance.
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- H. DNR patients who are in cardiopulmonary arrest should not be transported. Emergency response employees will contact the local police agency and/or coroner's office. Support to family members on scene should be offered as indicated.
- I. DNR patients who decline transport to the hospital, including those patients for whom transport is declined on their behalf, should not be transported. Preservation of the patient's privacy, dignity, and concern for comfort measures will be assured prior to the emergency response employee leaving the scene.
- J. If a DNR patient is transported to a hospital, the following shall apply:
1. A DNR order shall be honored by emergency response employees during transport of the patient.
  2. In general, a DNR patient should not be transported Code 3.
  3. The DNR order/directive should accompany the patient; the hospital should include a copy of the DNR order in the patient's hospital medical record.
  4. The attorney-in-fact (if applicable) should also go to the hospital.

Attachment A: EMS Prehospital Do Not Resuscitate (DNR) Form

Attachment B: CMA Durable Power of Attorney for Health Care Decisions

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